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RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

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STATE FOR WHA/CEN//JASON MACK

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [BH](#)
SUBJECT: BELIZE: GOVERNMENT FACES ANOTHER TOUGH FRIDAY

REF: BELMOPAN 342

¶1. Prime Minister Musa struggled to hold his cabinet in line following a large demonstration held on May 18 against his decision to provide a government guarantee of a BZ\$ 33 million (US \$16.5 million) private debt (Reftel). He put off a House of Representatives vote to authorize his commitment to Belize Bank until Friday May 25.

¶2. On May 22 the Defense Minister and the Minister of National Development were both fired. Additionally, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and the Minister of Health have all indicated they would resign rather than support the vote.

¶3. The opposition has again called for a rally to be held outside the parliament building in Belmopan on May 25. Police initially denied the application for a demonstration permit, but a judge issued an injunction allowing the protest to go forward. The May 18 protest had an estimated crowd of as many as 3500 anti-government demonstrators who threw rocks and bottles at police and government buildings. Security forces used tear gas to disperse the crowd.

¶4. In the run up to the May 25 House session police told the RSO that they are expecting the crowd to get unruly early in the day. Several unions are joining the protest and the Chamber of Commerce has urged businesses to close. We also understand that people have begun a silent prayer vigil at the Prime Minister's house in Belize City. (Comment: He'll need all the help he can get. End Comment.)

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